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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001806

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/ERA, EUR/RPM, IO/UNP, DRL/IRF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2014

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SUBJECT: EU RELEASES ANTI-SEMITISM REPORT

REF: STATE 784

Classified By: USEU POLOFF TODD HUIZINGA, FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On March 31, the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) released its long-awaited report on anti-Semitism in the EU. Its data indicate a growing level of anti-Semitic violence in Europe. Right-wing "skin-head" attacks continue unabated, while a growing number of attacks by Muslims in Europe account for the overall increase. A comparison with the previous EUMC report reveals the EUMC may be inviting a second wave of recrimination -- at a time when it has not yet recovered from the storm of controversy caused by its initial decision last winter not to release the first report. END SUMMARY.

REPORT DOCUMENTS INCREASED ANTI-SEMITISM

12. (U) At a March 31 press conference at the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg, EP President Pat Cox, EUMC Director Beate Winkler and European Jewish Congress President Cobi Benatoff presented the report, "Manifestations of the Antisemitism in the EU 2002-2003." Cox said: "The report asks basic questions: is there anti-Semitism in the EU, is it rising, and is it an issue that we have to address -- the answers are yes, yes and yes." Benatoff welcomed the report as a step in "preventing the conspiracy of silence," while adding that it confirmed his fear that "the cancer of anti-Semitism is back in Europe." All three joined in calling for concrete actions against anti-Semitism.

DIFFERS FROM PREVIOUS REPORT

13. (C) The controversy around the EUMC's initial refusal to release the previous paper appears to have exerted an influence on this new venture. The just-released report's assessment of anti-Semitism in the EU dilutes, with extreme care and plenty of equivocation, the most controversial findings of last winter's document -- which the EUMC characterized as "inadequate" and refused to release (until forced to do so by political pressure).

FIRST REPORT: MUSLIMS AND ISRAEL

14. (C) The first report, which covered the first half of 2002, asserted that Muslim Europeans and European attitudes toward Israel were the major cause for the rise in anti-Semitic attacks, and that &extremist far-right parties((did not play) a decisive role.⁸ The authors also examined anti-Semitic statements of pro-Palestinian groups, politicians, and &citizens from the political mainstream⁸ and posited a close connection on the political left between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. The report stated: &it could be said that the tradition of demonising Jews in the past is now being transferred to the state of Israel. In this way traditional anti-Semitism is translated into a new form, less deprived of legitimacy, whose employment today in Europe could become part of the political mainstream.⁸

NEW REPORT: ANTI-ISRAELI NOT ANTI-SEMITIC

15. (C) The just-released report attempts, with extreme care and plenty of equivocation, to mitigate those views. At one point, it says, rather clumsily, that "hostility toward Jews as 'Israelis'" is not anti-Semitic if it is "not based on ... antisemitic stereotyping of Jews." On the sources of anti-Semitism in Europe, the report concludes after a long and tedious discourse on &defining anti-Semitism⁸ (including a paragraph on why the term should be spelled &antisemitism⁸ and not "anti-Semitism⁸) that "it is problematic to make general statements with regard to the perpetrators of antisemitic acts." Winkler states on the EUMC website that "young, disaffected white Europeans, often stimulated by extreme right-wing groups" appear to be the largest group responsible for anti-Semitic attacks. The report notes, however, that a further source of anti-Semitism

in some countries was young people of North African Muslim extraction, and that they were changing the demographic nature of anti-Semitism in Europe.

COMMENT: STORM CLOUDS APPROACHING?

18. (C) COMMENT: Following the criticisms of the first report, this second effort is very careful in its arguments and in describing its methods and the reasons for its assessments. Cobi Benatoff's presence at the press conference announcing its release testifies, both politically and substantively, to its quality. Nevertheless, the way in which the EUMC continues to tread gingerly around the subject of anti-Semitism in Europe indicates the political volatility of this issue and a continuing reluctance to face this phenomenon in Europe boldly and with conviction. END COMMENT.

SCHNABEL